

the American people are as cynical as sometimes people in public life think they are. I think you all still believe in yourselves and your potential and your country.

Mr. Donovan. Congress is coming back from its break. And I'll just ask you just in a few seconds, have you heard anything here tonight that will change your agenda when you go back to Washington?

The President. No, but I'm going to tell them that near as I can tell, people sure want them to pass that crime bill and not fool around with it, do it right away. That's where we're going to start.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 7:35 p.m. at WCNC-TV studios.

Exchange With Reporters in Charlotte

April 5, 1994

Supreme Court Justice Resignation

Q. Mr. President, have you heard about Justice Blackmun's resignation tomorrow?

The President. I can't comment on it. Let's let him speak for himself.

Q. Have you spoken to him in the last two days?

The President. I have not.

Q. Have you got a short list, Mr. President?

The President. Let Justice Blackmun speak for himself. I have not spoken to him. We have to let him speak for himself.

Q. Has he written to you? Has he notified you?

The President. No. I have not talked to him. I have not talked to him or, to the best of my knowledge, we have received no letter from him. Let's let him speak for himself—some communication with him tomorrow.

Q. But given the recent shakeup at the White House, is the White House in a position to select a new Justice?

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:45 p.m. outside WCNC-TV studios. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks on the Resignation of Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun and an Exchange With Reporters

April 6, 1994

The President. Good morning. It is my duty and my honor on behalf of the people of the United States of America to thank Justice Blackmun for his lifetime of service to our Nation.

I have received his letter announcing his intention to step down from the Supreme Court. In so doing, he will step up into our history. During his 24 years on our highest court, Justice Blackmun has become part of the rich and evolving story of American justice and constitutional law with majesty and reason, with scholarship and grace. He is a good man who has earned the respect and the gratitude of every one of his fellow countrymen and women.

When President Nixon nominated Harry Blackmun for service on the Court, his candidacy naturally occasioned a great deal of speculation about what kind of Justice he would be. Some labeled him a strict constructionist. But he rejected any attempt to tag him with a label, saying, and I quote, "I've been called liberal and conservative. Labels are deceiving. I call them as I see them." Twenty-four years later, we can say that he did exactly what he said he would do 24 years ago.

It was President Woodrow Wilson who called our judiciary "the balance wheel of our entire system." It is meant to maintain the nice adjustment between individual rights and Government powers which constitutes political liberty. Harry Blackmun has been a steady and strong hand on that balance wheel.

In cases argued before him, he found the human dimension and struck the right balance in the struggle over how we might best overcome our legacy of racism, in protecting the women's reproductive rights, in providing poor people and sick people access to the lowest priced prescription drugs, in opening the courthouse doors to the mentally ill and upholding tough sentencing guidelines that keep hardened criminals confined in prison, in averting a constitutional crisis by